1: Powdermaker F-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OMI0 New Ireland OMI0
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2: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-30)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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MORTUARY RITES IN NEW IRELAND (BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO)[1]

By HORTENSE POWDERMAKER

121 IN New Ireland death is a most important ritual event and the rites concerning it are of particular psychological interest. The effect of the death on the survivors may be studied from two aspects: first, that of the rites which include the traditional activities of the survivors and the duties between them; second, that dealing with their emotional attitudes. Both are studied in chronological order—at the time of preparation for death, at burial, and after burial. The problem is to ascertain the function of the rites in connection with the emotional attitudes, or more concretely, to find out how the rites meet the psychological situation caused by death.

Among the survivors one distinguishes the clan relatives (in this society, close blood relatives through the female line), acquired relatives (husband or wife) and the rest of the community. Each of these groups is affected somewhat differently by the death and each functions in a different manner. According to their function, the survivors may be divided into mourners and what for want of a better name may be called executives, those responsible for carrying out the rites. Some fall into both groups.

Before describing the rites and discussing the problems involved 105 it is necessary to summarize briefly a few ethnological facts which have a bearing on the problem. This Melanesian society is both matrilineal and matrilocal. There are two exogamous moieties, the Eagle and the Hawk, which are subdivided into clans. The local unit is the village, which has a population of several hundred

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114 [1]The ethnological field work in New Ireland was done under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council in 1929-30. The island is divided into a 122 number of linguistic units and the unit which the writer studied comprised five villages (Lesu, Ambwa, Langania, Libba and Tandis), covering approximately twelve miles on the east coast, about eighty miles from the northern end of the island. The author is now a National Research Fellow (U.S.) under the sponsorship of Professor Clark Wissler.

4: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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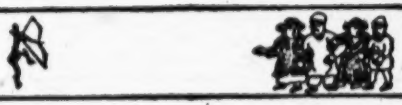

VITAL STATISTICS OF NEW IRELAND (Bismarck Archipelago) AS REVEALED IN GENEALOGIES

BY HORTENSE POWDERMAKER[1]

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INTRODUCTION

121 The purpose of the following study was to obtain birth and death rates which would show whether the native population is declining and, if it is, whether the decline is due to a low birth rate, a high mortality rate, or both. Sex ratios at birth and at the time of reproduction were also obtained.

121 114 The statistics were collected in a Melanesian community in New Ireland, (one of the islands in the Bismarck Archipelago and part of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea) where the writer lived for ten months. One linguistic unit, consisting of five villages on the east coast, about eighty miles from the northern end of the island, provided the material for the ethnological research. The villages were Ambwa, Lesu,[2] Langania, Libba and Tandis, and their total population is approximately 1,200. Residence was established in the village of Lesu, with a population of 222, and the bulk of the statistics were collected there.

METHOD

[126] Four hundred and fifty-five women and their offspring are the basis of the study. The statistics were collected by the genealogical method and figures for three generations were thus obtained. The results show 121 the trend for approximately the last hundred years. The genealogical method serves as a means for the comparison of age groups. Among a

[122] [1] The ethnological field work was done in 1929-1930, under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council and the author is now a Fellow of the National Research Council (U. S.), under the sponsorship of Dr. Clark Wissler.

[2] The spelling on government publications is Lossu. The spelling used in this text more closely approximates the native pronunciation of the word.